

REMARKS

We have addressed the Examiner's §112, first paragraph rejections in the amendments to the claims. In particular, we have amended claims 1 and 15, removing the language "allows an unobstructed passage across the threshold when in a compressed state." We also note that no prior art rejection was made as to dependent claim 11. Accordingly, we have amended independent claim 1 to include the feature recited in dependent claim 11 (now canceled). We submit that independent claim 1 is now in allowable condition. We have also added claims 16-22.

We further note that no prior art rejection was made as to claims 9 and 13-15. Claims 9 and 13 have been re-written in independent form, incorporating all the limitations of the claims on which it previously depended. Applicant therefore respectfully requests claims 9 and 13-15 be deemed allowable.

Prior Art Rejections

Examiner has additionally rejected claims 1-8, and 12 under 35 U.S.C. §103, citing DE-3514489 (hereinafter, Hack), in view of U.S. Pat. No. 6,094,757 (Torres) and U.S. Pat. No. 6,877,279 (Russell). Applicant traverses this rejection. We submit however that neither Hack nor Torres in any proper combination describe or suggest a water-retention system comprising end caps attached at ends of the collapsible outer shell, as recited in amended claim 1.

Claims 2-8 and 12 are dependent on claim 1, and are thus allowable for at least the reasons that claim 1 is allowable. Any circumstance in which the applicant has (a) addressed certain comments of the Examiner does not mean that the applicant concedes other comments of the Examiner, (b) made arguments for the patentability of some claims does not mean that there are not other good reasons for patentability of those claims and other claims, or (c) amended or canceled a claim does not mean that the applicant concedes any of the Examiner's positions with respect to that claim or other claims.

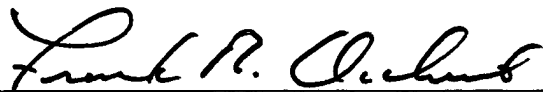
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In light of the foregoing comments, the Applicant respectfully requests that all currently pending claims be deemed allowable.

Respectfully submitted,

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